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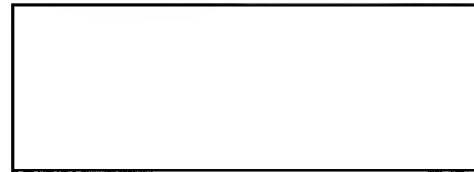
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Approved For Release 2003/09/26 : CIA-RDP79T00975A020400030002-0

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WEST GERMANY - MBFR: Bonn growing anxious over
course of negotiations. (Page 6)

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WEST GERMANY - MBFR: State Secretary Frank is coming to Washington late this month to discuss growing West German anxieties over mutual and balanced forces reduction (MBFR) negotiations.

In a conversation with Ambassador Rush on 28 October, Frank reviewed several points on which he feared the US and West Germany were diverging. Most important is the German belief that the opening phases of negotiations should seek agreement on MBFR principles and on constraining troop movements, rather than on immediate reductions. In addition, Bonn believes that the geographic area must not be limited to East and West Germany, and that indigenous as well as stationed force reductions must be included, if only at a later stage.

Frank's remarks, while containing little that is new and couched in friendly terms, are the most explicit account of Bonn's position to date. They add up to a very cautious approach to the MBFR question. This stance reflects West Germany's concern that US interest in force reduction negotiations is dictated by domestic pressures, and that negotiations might give impetus to arguments for large-scale US troop reductions in Europe.

This same concern is complicating the process of reaching an agreement with the US to offset the costs of American forces in Germany. Talks on the latter issue have been stalled since early summer, with resolution of the German position hampered by Defense Minister Schmidt's feeling that US troop reductions, with or without an agreement with the East, are inevitable.

Skepticism on MBFR has the secondary advantage, in Bonn's eyes, of aligning West Germany somewhat closer to France and the UK, both of which doubt that mutual force reductions could serve European defense interests. Although Brandt and Foreign Minister Scheel continue to value highly their ties with Washington, they also want to mend fences in Western Europe, particularly with France. In this spirit they are also seeking agreement with their EC partners on monetary reform.

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